Reviewer's report

Title: Promoting an Ethic of Engagement in Pediatric Palliative Care Research

Version: 3 Date: 6 September 2015

Reviewer: Christian Schulz

Reviewer's report:

Dear author team,

thank you very much for the opportunity and privilege to read your submitted debate article. It is very well written, presents a highly relevant and novel argument into an existing ethical research debate, is well argued and substantially referenced. The issue of PPC research user involvement is not only interesting but crucially relevant for the development of the whole field of pediatric palliative care and research and beyond. It is, in the end, a question about the primacy of experience over essence, the central question raised in existential philosophy. Consequently, your debate reaches way beyond a mere sociological perspective, but implicitly raises epistemological questions of what knowledge is and how we can know what we know (here: about the experience of a dying child).

Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which you can choose to ignore)

Include existential-phenomenological research findings into your debate. They would broaden the basis of your argument and the methodology behind it (e.g. Phenomenology of Practice, Max van Manen) could serve as an additional framework of techniques for performing PPC research with co-researching children (where applicable).

line 301/302: "In this regard, deliberative stakeholder consultations are ideal methodological avenues for such inclusion." I suggest attenuating the strength of the argument softly, maybe using "could serve as" instead of "are". The utility of this method still needs to be proven in this particular context.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests